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ABSTRACT

Partnerships is an Emporia State University program designed to strengthen university relationships with public schools in Kansas. It contains four strategies for offering services needed by public school practitioners: (1) providing leadership, research, and staff development assistance to formal school district consortia in the university's region; (2) sponsoring critical issues updating workshops on new/revised concepts/practices for individual Kansas educators; (3) sponsoring conferences on topics of special interest to both university personnel and state professional associations; and (4) conducting training institutes to prepare school district leaders in curriculum, effective schools, and reading coordination. The program attempts to become a dynamic agent in the total educational community, exercise sensitivity to varying perspectives on educational theory/practice, advocate workable procedures and program models, use effective leadership techniques, and identify and build a network to serve its constituency. Given an appropriate amount of funding and adequate staffing, the Partnerships program can be replicated by any college or university. (LFL)

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PARTNERSHIPS: BUILDING A MODEL UNIVERSITY PROGRAM FOR SERVICE TO KANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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PARTNERSHIPS: BUILDING A MODEL UNIVERSITY PROGRAM
FOR SERVICE TO KANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Partnerships is an Emporia State University program designed to strengthen relationships with public schools. It contains four basic strategies for offering services needed by public school practitioners: (1) providing leadership to formal school district consortia located in the University's proximate region, (2) sponsoring critical issues workshops for individual Kansas educators who need up-dating on new or revised concepts and practices, (3) co-sponsoring conferences on topics of special interest to both university personnel and the state's professional associations, and (4) conducting multi-phase training institutes for the purpose of preparing school district leaders in curriculum, effective schools, and reading.

THE PROBLEM

Regional universities tend to offer services to school personnel which have little or no relationship to real needs or concerns. This condition exists because universities do not (1) become part of the total educational community, (2) exercise sensitivity to varying perspectives on educational theory and practice, (3) advocate workable procedures and program models, (4) use leadership techniques known to be most effective, and (5) clearly identify a constituency and build a solid network to serve that constituency.

An aloofness from the mainstream of public education constrains personnel in regional universities from developing and advocating procedures and program models that really work in the public schools. There is a tendency for such universities to act as mere clearinghouses of information, not as centers in which decisions are made and assertively acted upon. This "clearinghouse of information" mentality, and the penchant for avoiding the role of advocate, reduces a regional university's ability to provide leadership. Finally, many regional universities are unclear as to what constitutes a proper constituency in terms of geographic area and fields of human interest. There have been many instances in which a constituency has been either too large or small for a university to be truly effective.

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THE GOALS

The goals of Emporia State's Partnerships program are directly related to the five components shown in "The Problem" section of this document. Through the Partnerships program Emporia State seeks to:

1. become a dynamic agent in the total educational community,
2. exercise sensitivity to varying perspectives on educational theory and practice,
3. advocate workable procedures and program models,
4. use leadership techniques known to be most effective, and
5. clearly identify a constituency and build a solid network to serve that constituency.

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS

To meet the five goals of the Partnerships program, Emporia State's College of Education (1) provides leadership to formal school district consortia, (2) sponsors critical issues workshops, (3) co-sponsors conferences on topics of special interest, and (4) conducts multi-phase training institutes.

Formal School District Consortia

The College of Education is presently engaged in two major public school collaborative enterprises, one of long standing and one only recently consummated. The College's collaborative arrangements noted above exist with two organizations: the Flint Hills Educational Research and Development Association (FHERDA) and Educational Service and Staff Development of Central Kansas (ESSDAK).

The Flint Hills Education and Research Development Association (FHERDA) is a consortium of 18 public school districts and two special education cooperatives located in east central Kansas. It has been affiliated with Emporia State University since its inception over 15 years ago. The purpose of the consortium arrangement is to strengthen the ties between the University and the member schools to mutually benefit each constituency. The University is actively involved in the following areas:

1. Leadership--The consortium is governed by the member superintendents, the Dean of the ESU College of Education who serves as Executive Director, and a University faculty member who is Associate Director. The University has played a leading role in numerous activities

designed to assist the schools individually and collectively. These activities include the cooperative purchasing of instructional supplies which is coordinated by the University in cooperation with a committee of superintendents, writing and submitting grant proposals on behalf of the schools, providing technical expertise to assist the schools in coping with day to day problems, and more importantly, conducting staff development activities for all school personnel. Additionally, the University initiates regular leadership retreats for the superintendents which feature speakers of national stature.

2. Research--The University provides a variety of research services for the member schools. Data analyses prepared by the University in the areas of finance, staff, pupil population, and instruction are presented in a monthly FHERDA bulletin. Major cooperative research projects are undertaken on an occasional basis. Currently underway is an evaluation of secondary school effectiveness in the consortia which will be continuous in nature and involve special staff hired cooperatively by the consortium and the University.
3. Staff Development--FHERDA is the only multi-school district collaborative in the United States in which all certified school personnel i.e., counselors, teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals, participate in two one-day conferences on a university campus. Nearly 180 special sessions are designed for the 1,400 participating school personnel. Also, it is worthy of note that all disciplines on campus, that is, science, English, math, music, etc., participate in the campus-wide inservice program for school personnel in the Association.

The University also sponsors a new teacher training program, involving on-site development activities for all beginning teachers within the consortium. Additionally, a continuing training program in the areas of evaluation and supervision of instruction has been implemented for all building administrators in the various districts.

4. Critical Issues Workshops--The University, in cooperation with the FHERDA schools, presents workshops on issues of topical relevance on a continuing basis. Such a co-sponsored workshop on the topic of working with marginal teachers drew 150 administrators and university personnel from across Kansas, while a similar presentation on merit pay and career ladders drew an even wider audience.

The success of the joint ESU-FHERDA efforts to provide support and services to the individual small districts has created an atmosphere in which an increasingly close working relationship has developed between the two institutions. ESU faculty members are frequently in the districts providing professional services, and FHERDA staff members are often on the Emporia State campus providing support services to the University, including classroom instruction.

The Educational Service and Staff Development Association of Central Kansas (ESSDACK) was implemented less than two years ago with 17 districts surrounding McPherson, and is now an organization containing 19 districts with a student enrollment of 17,280 and a faculty and support staff of 1,350. It was initiated by the dean of the College of Education and a few superintendents in the McPherson area. Its organization and purpose are identical to FHERDA, and the director of the Center for Educational Research and Service provides assistance as executive director. ESSDACK has already begun its cooperative purchasing program, employs a part-time coordinator of staff development and inservice education, and has sponsored two staff development/inservice education programs. The ESSDACK Council of Superintendents meets monthly in the Board Office of the McPherson Unified School District. The executive director's participation, as a representative from Emporia State, causes the University to be an on-going part of a very significant educational community in Kansas. The cooperative purchasing and growing staff development programs are a direct result of the executive director's advocacy, advice, or participatory assistance.

Critical Issues Workshops

Every year public school educators are faced with new problems, or those continuing circumstances which defy easy solutions. Through systematic contact with educators associated with FHERDA, ESSDACK, and other organizations, Emporia State is sensitive to their concerns and broadens its geographical constituency to those Kansas educators who need specific forms of assistance.

Conferences on Topics of Special Interest

Personnel at Emporia State are active in numerous associations and agencies, but a special relationship exists with the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB), Association of Teacher Educators-Kansas (ATE-K), and the Joint

Commission on Public Understanding of the Law (represented on the Joint Commission are the Kansas State Department of Education, Kansas Supreme Court, and Kansas Bar Association). These special relationships have resulted in the co-sponsoring of conferences on the Emporia State campus on issues of mutual concern. In the case of ATE-K and the Joint Commission, this relationship has blossomed into a cooperative initiative for building service networks and producing publications.

Training Institutes

In 1984 the University's Center for Educational Research and Service sponsored the Curriculum Development Institute, an intensive series of seminars and follow-up activities designed to train curriculum directors. In addition to the curriculum program, institutes are now offered to districts that desire specially-prepared leaders in effective schools and reading coordination. Districts contract with the Center to receive on-campus training and follow-up support, which includes on-site visits by trainers, for a full calendar year. The Institute program is specifically designed to meet goals 3 and 4, as it advocates workable procedures and promotes the use of leadership techniques known to be most effective.

COMMITMENT AND CHANCE FOR REPLICATION ELSEWHERE

That Emporia State is committed to the Partnerships program is shown by its heavy investment of regularly-budgeted funds for personnel, office space, and clerical services...especially with its three-year-old Center for Education Research and Service. This is no soft-money project, and it seems likely that the Kansas Legislature will continue to provide the added support necessary to maintain the program. In the 1985 session alone it authorized $32,984.00 more than the regular operating expenses, for the purpose of funding components of the College of Education's "A Quest for Excellence" proposal.

Given an appropriate amount of funding and adequate staffing, the Partnerships program can be replicated by any college or university. Emporia State has been contacted by universities in California and Texas, and Northern Arizona University is now implementing a similar project.

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